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IITA Bulletin

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News from NASA

Items of Interest from the IITA Project Office

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The NASA HPCC program, which includes the IITA project, recently completed its Independent Annual Review (IAR) at Ames Research Center. Since the review findings have not yet been completed and presented to management, it would be premature to detail the debriefing here. It would be fair to say, however, that many of the review board members made positive comments about the remote sensing, digital library, and educational components of the IITA project.

Tom Dyson, IITA deputy project coordinator, expressed thanks to those projects which provided Web server statistics, images, and other materials in support of the IAR. He stated that the review appeared to be very successful and that the stats and information helped Mark León, IITA project manager, to highlight the effectiveness of the organization's efforts.

"I know that it was a lot of information to pull together in a short time, but it was impressive," Tom said. "There are a lot of good things going on in this organization and the IAR was an opportunity to take a snapshot of them to show to others.."

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In other IITA news, the project office is nearing completion of the Learning Technologies Project (LTP) strategic plan, which is to be presented to management in late July. This plan has been a collaborative effort headed up by Jennifer Sellers, with representation from the LTP stakeholders and many of the projects and NASA centers that will make up the LTP. Assuming management endorsement of the strategic plan, the LTP management plan will follow shortly thereafter. The LTP management plan will include information on product dissemination, as well as metrics for measuring against the objectives laid out in the strategic plan.

Based on the input from the collaborative group that produced the strategic plan, there is a strong desire to assure that the metrics collected under the management plan are meaningful, but are provided in a routine and easy to collect manner. While the exact details are still being worked out, it is clear that one key measurement will continue to be Web presence. The IITA project office is asking that every project include information on the total number of raw hits, total bytes transferred, and number of unique IPs each month as part of the monthly report.

"Having this information at our fingertips will make it easier for us to respond quickly to upper management and reduce the burden on the projects to produce historical Web site traffic information," said Mark León. Mark is asking each project to provide this information beginning with the reports for the month of July.

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The IITA project office is taking steps to assure a smooth transition of the educational technology efforts of IITA, which will be carried forward under the LTP banner beginning October 1. To accomplish this in a timely manner, Alan Nelson (at GSFC) will work with the projects that are ending this year to explore their intentions regarding future association with LTP. Should server space be needed, RSPAC has been asked to provide it, but since the impact of this request is still being assessed, Mark León has asked that the IITA projects contacted work with Alan Nelson to be sure that the best possible options are explored and pursued.

News Bytes

NASA's Observatorium Seeks Web Surfer Feedback

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NASA's Observatorium is asking Web surfers for help.

In an effort to better serve its users, NASA's Observatorium is conducting research to determine the type of navigation tool they like best. The project takes a single Web article, *Our Sun*, and reconfigures it into three distinct types of navigation — side frame, back-next, and button bar. Users are then asked to briefly visit each and complete a survey about the different styles.

The research project is located at **http://observe.ivv.nasa.gov/nasa/research/research.html**

"Right now, every Web site has its own look and style, but some sites are difficult to navigate," according to Kelly Brown, director of Web Technologies, who is conducting the survey. "By performing this type

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Nothin' but Net

HTML Workaround

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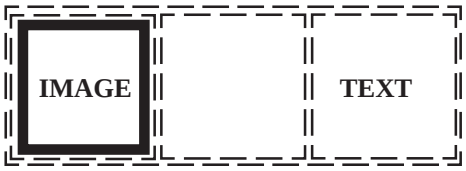
These days just about anyone can create a Web page with the many HTML editors that are out there, but the editors are still as primitive as the HTML language itself. If you know the right technique — hidden tables — you can lay out your page just the way you want to. Using hidden tables as a layout tool allows you to be much more flexible because you can place graphics and text anywhere you like. Below are the tags and definitions used in the example.

<TABLE BORDER=0> - The start of a table with a border width of 0.

</TABLE> - Ends the table.
<TR> - Table Row (vertical).
</TR> - Ends the Table Row.
<TD> - Table Column (horizontal).
</TD> - Ends the Table Column.
<COLSPAN> - Specifies the amount of space the cell will span minimally.

Example:



Example table code:

```
<TABLE BORDER=0>
<TR>
<TD><IMG SRC="small1.gif"></TD>
<TD COLSPAN="50"></TD>
<TD>Here is an example of how <BR>
you can use tables to lay out<BR>
you Web page.</TD>
</TR>
</TABLE>
```

Example Table Explanation:

The <TABLE BORDER=0> tag merely says to the browser that a table is going to be displayed with a border of 0 pixels. The <TR> tag tells the browser that a vertical column is to be displayed. The <TD> tag tells the browser to display the table horizontal one cell (Individual Square). After telling the browser that a horizontal cell is started, an image tag is added which will be shown in that cell. Finally, the </TD> tag is added to close the cell.

After the first cell is created, another cell is created using the same <TD></TD> tags. The <COLSPAN=”50"> tag is added between the two tags to tell the browser that the cell is to span fifty pixels horizontally.

Finally, another cell is created to display the text. The text is added between the beginning and ending tags (including the <BR> tag, which tells the browser that the text that follows is to start on another line). After the cell is ended with the </TD> tag, the </TR> tag is added to end the table horizontally. The last step is to end the table with the </TABLE> tag.

If you want to display a cell under another cell, just add another <TR> tag after the </TR> tag. This will let your browser know that another vertical cell is to be displayed.

These days it is critical to have an appealing site to keep people coming back. The days of long, scrolling Web pages quickly went out of style once hidden tables were used in the layout of pages. When creating a Web page, keep in mind that the design of a Web site doesn’t make it good, it only makes it better.

All about CATs

NASA-Aviation Academy 2000 Completes Summer Academy

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The NASA-Aviation Academy 2000 project at Wooddale High School just finished a two-week summer academy in which six teachers and numerous corporate volunteers presented fifty students from the Memphis area with instruction on the local aviation/travel industry, tours of aviation/travel facilities, and free flying lessons.

The two one-week programs were open to fourteen-year olds who are transferring from middle school to the ninth grade next fall, with a focus on minority and underrepresented inner-city youth. The only real limitation was classroom seating space. There were twenty-three students on a waiting list. One of the objectives was to familiarize Memphis students with the Aviation/Travel optional program opportunities at Wooddale High School.

Daily activities included a full six hours of fun and learning. Each day began with students compiling journals highlighting the previous day’s events and writing notes to thank sponsors. They then browsed the Internet looking for course-related URLs and participated in a workshop. Workshops included constructing Delta Dart rubber band-powered balsa airplanes and building and flying Wizard rockets.

Tours included the Memphis-Shelby County International Airport facility, Northwest Airlines-Memphis Hub Operations, and the Federal Express Hub and Heavy Maintenance facilities and Charter

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NASA’s Observatorium Seeks Web Surfer Feedback

of research, we’re trying to determine what users feel is the easiest way to get around a site — and then implement that style throughout an article.”

NASA’s Observatorium homepage is located at **http:/observe.ivv.nasa.gov**

All about CATs (Cont.)

Flight Operations Center. Tours went from the backstairs to the rooftops and included exquisite meals from the famous Peabody Hotel and the Marriott Hotel. Students saw how passengers arrive in Memphis, visited where Tom Cruise lunched while filming in Memphis, and saw where the Peabody ducks reside when they are not swimming in the Peabody fountain.

Students were also exposed to post-secondary educational opportunities. They toured the Shelby State Community College and State Technical Institute of Memphis campuses, where they were presented with T-shirts. They learned in a positive and fun way about the various aspects of campus life and the many student activities available to them. Finally, they were shown the newly opened Tennessee Technology Center's Aviation Campus. Here, Wooddale Aviation/Travel students, during their senior year, can take the general mechanics portion of the FAA-approved Aircraft Maintenance Technician's licensing course.

The ultimate event for all of the students was the day of flying at Douglas Aviation, Inc. Here students put the lessons learned about the science of flight to the test...in the air. They were given a short class on general aviation and fixed base operations and were told what it takes to earn a private pilot's license. Then they were teamed with an instructor for ground school and walk-arounds. Lastly, they took to the air. Each student, closely monitored by a certified flight instructor, was allowed to start the engine, taxi to the end of the runway, take off, fly a prebriefed pattern, and return for landing. A photo and first flight certificate signed by the pilot in command were presented to each fledgling to document this lofty occasion.

Every comment received from the students echoed that they would have liked a longer academy, and all of the parents' comments were favorable. Every corporate sponsor is willing to participate again next year. All in all, the 1997 Summer Aviation/Travel Academy was an unparalleled success.

The teachers and students who participated in this year's academies want to express their gratitude to the NASA-Ames Research Center for its sponsorship of the NASA-Wooddale Aviation Academy 2000 grant, which in part made this summer program possible.

SPARK

Students Complete Internships; Busy Mid-Summer Planned

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The first eight of ten on-site internship positions are completed. They include: Horizon Air, two female students; Interstate Aviation mechanic's assistant, two male students (both students were asked to return next summer and one may begin working there part-time this fall); and Robotics Laboratory, two male and two female students. The remaining students, both female, have begun their on-site experience at Interstate Aviation with a private pilot.

The private pilot ground course is going well, and the students are enthusiastic. Page layout and video production of the internship experience have begun. This will be in addition to the follow-up participation of the internship students. Thirteen Native American students are creating Web pages of the aeronautics modules. Look for them shortly.

July activities will include a field trip to the Boeing Museum of Air and Flight, internship page and video production, module pages and activities, concluding the '97 Upward Bound program, and beginning exploration of interaction with the NASA Dryden Life Support group on parachute preparation and use.

This bulletin will also be available in Adobe Acrobat format on the Developers' Workshop Web site at: **http://developers.ivv.nasa.gov/collab/pubs/bulletin/**

LDAPS Lists Recent Achievements, Including Updated Web Site

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The LEGO Data Acquisition and Prototyping Systems (LDAPS) at Tufts University recently finished a new set of drivers (supports microphones, etc.) while preparing for a July workshop for twenty teachers.

In school news, kindergartners started playing with torque and did a great job of differentiating between weight and torque, work was begun on the solar system (see **http://hastings.ci.lexington.ma.us/WebPages/Schools/Hastings/Staff/RSherman/LDAP.intro.html**), and a tally was made of requests for the LEGO drivers from all over the world. (Check out the results at **http://ldaps.ivv.nasa.gov/Elaine/mapofpeople.html**)

You'll also want to check out the LDAPS Web site. There are a lot of changes, including new drivers, a new instruction manual, and even improvements on the physics concepts section. It's located at **http://ldaps.ivv.nasa.gov/**

MCET Retools Computer System in Preparation for Fall 1997

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The Massachusetts Corporation for Educational Telecommunications (MCET) has recently upgraded its Web server software in order to proceed with the installation of The Inquisitor. The Inquisitor will provide individual statistics for the Web pages of Take Off! and all other MCET grant-funded projects to help identify similarities and differences among the individual users of various Web pages within the main MCET Web site. The first three

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All about CATs (Cont.)

units of the new Web site and the interactive front page are completed (for Netscape 3 and Internet Explorer 3, the new standard for the site). The Web team is now editing all the units to ensure compatibility with lower end browsers.

Lower end users will not be able to enjoy all the features, but will still have access to all the content.

RSPAC is developing the graphic interface for the new Career Cards. The new cards will feature a new page for all the guests in the Take Off! Part II Career Corner. Communication with the featured role models will be just a link away.

Web development is expected to continue throughout July and part of August to get the site ready for the rebroadcast of Take Off! Part II in the fall of 1997.

Cool Links

Cool Earth Science Site

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This month's Cool Earth Science Site is the Earth and Moon Viewer at **http://www.fourmilab.ch/earthview/vplanet.html**

On this very interesting site you can see a map of the Earth that shows the areas of day and night regions in near-real time. One can also look at the Earth from the Sun or the Moon or, from a satellite in Earth orbit, the night side of the Earth, any location on the planet by latitude, longitude, and altitude, or from above various cities around the globe.

Images are generated from full-color images of the Earth by day and night, a topographic map of the Earth, near-current weather satellite imagery, or a composite of cloud cover superimposed on a map of the Earth. A color composite of clouds, land, sea temperatures, and ice can also be generated.

The Moon can also be viewed from the Earth, the Sun, night side, above specific areas on the lunar surface, or as a map depicting day and night. One can also compare the appearance of the Moon at perigee and apogee, and calculate both.

For a different perspective on the Earth and Moon, give this site a look-see.

Cool Space Science Site

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Check out the Web pages of the Center for Earth & Planetary Studies at the National Air and Space Museum at **http://ceps.nasm.edu:2020/homepage.html** Here you'll find lots of information and images on Mars, the Voyager mission to the outer solar system, the Apollo missions to the Moon, the Earth, and much more.

If you would like to be on the IITA Bulletin mailing list, please send e-mail to Scott Gillespie at: sgillespie@rspac.ivv.nasa.gov, or write to: BDM/RSPAC, 100 University Drive, Fairmont, WV 26554. Phone: (304) 367-8324, fax: (304) 367-8211.